

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

The Thorns That Irritate

Standard: I. Culture
II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
IV. Individual Development and Identity
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
IX. Global Connections
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Create an analogy related to the concept of human rights
- Explain the new terminology of the 1970s in foreign policy concerns about the Soviet Union
- Write an editorial applying global change, human rights, and fairness to foreign policy
- Compare his/her editorial with another

Time: 2 class periods

Materials: Documents: 1974 *Excerpts from the Jackson–Vanik Amendment* (with background)
1977 *A New Foreign Policy Based on Human Rights*
1977 *A Commitment to Fairness, Not Force*

Materials: Colored poster paper or construction paper in lighter colors (8½" x 11")

Access for students to a *New York Times* editorial:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/16/opinion/16iht-edharris.html>

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

An act of Congress might seem to be a curious foreign policy tool, but in 1974 Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson and Representative Charles Vanik sponsored a resolution that had a big impact on U.S. foreign policy. The Jackson–Vanik Amendment, added to the Trade Act of 1974, aimed squarely at Soviet practice of levying a "diploma tax" on those attempting to emigrate. Officially, the tax was designed to repay the government for higher education cost. In reality, the Soviets were desperate to stop "brain drain" and prevent Jews from going to the United States and the West. President Gerald Ford signed it into law in 1975.

Ford's successor, Jimmy Carter, is remembered for a seemingly dramatic shift to include concern about human rights in U.S. foreign policy priorities. Two of Carter's most famous speeches are included here and students will be asked to define the new terms of this policy and then write an editorial about the issues and irritants that encouraged the change.

Pre-Lesson

1. Place a sheet of the colored poster or construction paper on each desk before students arrive.

Day One

1. Using the colored paper, ask students to define human rights in a few words and create an analogy to represent the word:

Human rights is to _____ as _____ is to _____.

2. With student assistance, post these immediately around the classroom
3. Distribute the document, *Excerpts from the Jackson Vanik Amendment*, asking students to read quickly and be able to explain why this amendment is directed at "non-market" economies.
4. Discuss with the students when they are ready what a non-market economy is and where they are in the world. Why did we oppose normal trade with these economies?
5. Distribute the exercise, *Global Change*, and ask students to explain each of the terms based on the documents at hand.
6. By the time they are midway through the exercise, distribute the Carter documents because they will need them to complete the definitions.
7. If students do not finish, they may finish the exercise for homework.

Pre-Lesson: Day Two

1. Download and print copies of the 2007 *New York Times* editorial, *End of a Cold War Relic*.

Day Two

1. For review ask each student to explain the analogies that were posted on the classroom walls yesterday. Discussion could follow.
2. Using these ideas and the materials from the previous class, ask students to write an editorial explaining their views on the role (if they see any) that human rights and fairness should play in the changing world that President Carter saw around him, also giving an opinion on whether the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment should be continued. Be sure to explain the difference between an editorial and an essay. Draft first and with teacher coaching create a final copy.

- 3.** As the students finish their editorials, distribute the *New York Times* editorial and ask the students to read and compare it with their work. There should be many differences, but they should be able to see why and how an old “thorn of irritation” is still a current one.
- 4.** Discuss differences and what they in turn have written. Ask for volunteers to read.
- 5.** Collect their editorials for grading.

Extension Activities:

- 1.** Collect any or many of the books former President Carter has written since his presidency for classroom use.
- 2.** Have students research the life of Jimmy Carter to determine where his human rights ideals developed.
- 3.** Have students bring in video clips of human rights abuses around the world and explain what is being done about it. (Many young people today have organizations to help in some of these situations.) ■